



## PRIVATE LIVES THE DIRECTOR'S TAKE

By Dennis Razze,  
Associate Artistic Director

I first became aware of the playwright, composer, and raconteur Noël Coward when I was in college. The fledgling Allentown College theatre company produced his musical comedy *Red Peppers*. This 1936 musical in one act was part of a collection of plays known as *Tonight at 8:30*. The original production starred Noël Coward and famed British actress Gertrude Lawrence as George and Lily Pepper who were a husband and wife touring duo that performed in the provincial English music hall. I thought it was great fun, and I became even more intrigued by Coward when we produced *Oh, Coward!*, a musical revue of Coward's acerbically witty songs like "Don't Put Your Daughter on the Stage, Mrs. Worthington!" as well as some of his bitter sweet love songs like "I'll See You Again."

Audiences loved seeing Coward and Lawrence perform together, a pairing that began with Coward's 1930

play *Private Lives*. Coward and Lawrence were great friends, some even believed lovers, but that is unlikely. Coward did adore Lawrence even though they often wrangled. Coward wrote *Private Lives* while he was on tour in Asia. He contracted a bad case of the flu in Shanghai and was ill for two weeks. During that time, he drafted the shape of a play that would become *Private Lives*, and he wrote the actual script in four days. He immediately sent copies of the play to Gertrude Lawrence and his manager to ask their reactions to the play. He also asked Lawrence to reserve the fall of that year to star opposite him in a production of the play which he would also direct in London.

Coward received as many as thirty telegrams back from Lawrence who first said that the play had "nothing wrong with it that can't be fixed." Coward shot back that the only thing that was going to be fixed was her performance. Lawrence had a previous

commitment to do another play, so Coward threatened that he was going to cast another actress, but unknown to Coward, Lawrence had cleared her schedule and was already learning her lines while staying at a villa in South-Eastern France. Coward joined her there in July, and they began working on the play together.

By August they were back in London rehearsing the play with the two actors who would play Sibyl Chase and Victor Prynne. Coward cast Adrienne Allen and Laurence Olivier as the honeymooning spouses because he felt that they needed to be attractive people who would be credible marriage partners to Elyot and Amanda. While rehearsing the play, the Lord Chamberlain—who must approve all plays for production—took exception to the second act love scene because the couple was divorced and now married to others. Coward went himself to plead the case of the play by performing the entirety of it before the censor, and saying that the scene would not be objectionable due to his artful direction. The Lord Chamberlain relented and rehearsals continued.

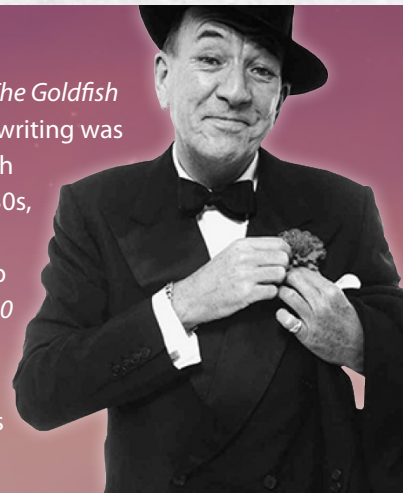
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## The Playwright: Noël Coward

Noël Peirce Coward was born in 1899 and made his professional stage debut as Prince Mussel in *The Goldfish* at the age of 12, leading to many child actor appearances over the next few years. His breakthrough in playwriting was the controversial *The Vortex* (1924) which featured themes of drugs and adultery and made his name as both actor and playwright in the West End and on Broadway. During the frenzied 1920s and the more sedate 1930s, Coward wrote a string of successful plays, musicals and intimate revues including *Fallen Angels* (1925), *Hay Fever* (1925), *Easy Virtue* (1926), *This Year of Grace* (1928), and *Bitter Sweet* (1929). His professional partnership with childhood friend Gertrude Lawrence started with *Private Lives* (1930) and continued with *Tonight at 8:30* (1936).

During World War II, he remained a successful playwright, screenwriter and director, as well as entertaining the troops and even acting as an unofficial spy for the Foreign Office. His plays during these years

*continues on page 3...*





# Notes from the Producing Artistic Director

It's been a joy to share our 2019 season with you thus far—both *Crazy for You* and *The Mystery of Irma Vep* have delighted audiences and hopefully provided festive and refreshing summer entertainment. The second half of our season offers three masterworks—Shakespeare's take on one of the most famous love stories of all time—*Antony and Cleopatra*, alternating with one of the finest modern comedies spiced with the acerbic wit of Noël Coward—*Private Lives*—"an intimate comedy" which peeks behind the curtain to reveal shaken, not stirred, romantic escapades.



Patrick Mulcahy

Look forward to a continued stream of gifted artists. Stage, television, and film actors Neal Bledsoe and Nondumiso Tebe will portray the legendary Roman warrior and the Egyptian queen in a striking new production directed by acclaimed director Eleanor Holdridge. The wonderful Eleanor Handley, Olivia in last season's *Twelfth Night* and West Coast stage and screen actor Matthew Floyd Miller, will play the divorced couple who, now on their honeymoons with new spouses, fall in love all over again in *Private Lives*. Dennis Rasse, director of last season's critically acclaimed production of *Ragtime* directs this hilarious romp.

Our "Extreme Shakespeare," in which the actors direct themselves in much the same way Shakespeare's actors would have rehearsed at the Globe, is *Henry IV, Part 1*. John Ahlin will return to perform the irrepressibly comedic and insightful Sir John Falstaff and Prince Hal will be played by Mairin Lee who starred as Viola de Lesseps in *Shakespeare in Love* last season.

For your children, look forward to *The Adventures of Robin Hood and Maid Marian* as well as the terrific *Shakespeare for Kids* where your kids can be introduced to the Bard of Avon in a fun and entertaining experience created just for them.

Arrive early to performances and enjoy the beauty of our outdoor space, *On the Green*, with enhanced dining and seating options that are not to be missed.

Thanks for being part of our 2019 season and I hope to see you in the lobby!

*Patrick Mulcahy*

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Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's productions of *Antony & Cleopatra* and *Henry IV, Part 1* are part of Shakespeare in American Communities, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.



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The play was originally met with a mixed critical response, but because of its entertainment value has proven extraordinarily popular with audiences ever since. Noël Coward later wrote:

“The critics described *Private Lives* variously as ‘tenuous, thin, brittle, gossamer, iridescent, and delightfully daring’. All of which connoted in the public mind cocktails, repartee and irreverent allusions to copulation, thereby causing a gratifying number of respectable people to queue up at the box office.”

Audiences responded enthusiastically to the play, and it has been revived many times to great success. A film of the play was made in 1931 starring Robert Montgomery and Norma Shearer. Coward himself found the film only passable. On the stage, famous actors who have played Elyot and Amanda include Brian Bedford and Maggie Smith, Alec McCowen and Penelope Keith, Bill Nighy and Helena Bonham Carter, and most recently the late Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan. I recall seeing the 1983 Broadway production that starred Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, and certainly their real life marriage made the play all the more intriguing as many took it as a glimpse inside their private lives.

The play’s premise that concerns a divorced couple who have both remarried and are now honeymooning at the same time, staying at the same hotel in adjoining rooms, and then after seeing each other again realize that they are still in love, is absurd to say the least. Even less plausible is

their sudden decision to immediately flee to Paris, leaving their current spouses behind without even an explanation. It is supremely ridiculous, but it makes for delicious comedy—especially because the rogue couple consists of such urbane and entertaining people as Elyot and Amanda.

PSF has cast captivating, witty actors as the two couples. Eleanor Handley, who you may remember played Maggie in our production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and Kate in our most recent *The Taming of the Shrew*, as well as Olivia in last season’s *Twelfth Night*, will play Amanda.

Matthew Floyd Miller, an actor with many successful television and regional theatre credits and is new to PSF, will play Elyot. Luigi Sottile, who played the title role in last year’s terrific *Shakespeare in Love*, returns to play Victor Prynne. Sybil Chase will be portrayed by Talley Gale, a skilled comedienne who is also making her PSF debut.

Both the set and the costume designs for *Private Lives* must be as elegant and sophisticated

as the characters. Our designers, Roman Tatarowicz and Sarah Cubbage, have come up with a wonderful art deco environment and some beautiful gowns and formal attire that should certainly create the desired effervescence of the play. The first act occurs in a posh hotel in Deauville on the Normandy coast and the second moves to Amanda’s tasteful Parisian apartment complete with a view of the Eiffel Tower.

I hope you will join us at PSF for this witty and entertaining play about marital relationships among the upper classes and the eternal battle of the sexes. ■



Gertrude Lawrence and Noël Coward in *Private Lives*, 1930

included *Blithe Spirit* which ran for 1,997 performances, outlasting the war. However, the post-war years were more difficult. Austerity was the prevalent mood in Britain and the industry had little time for Coward’s brittle wit. In response, Coward re-invented himself as a cabaret and TV star, particularly in America, and in 1955 he played a sell-out season in Las Vegas. In the mid-1950s he settled in Jamaica and Switzerland, and enjoyed a renaissance in the early 1960s becoming the first living playwright to be performed by the National Theatre, when he directed *Hay Fever* there. Late in his career he was lauded for his role in the films *Our Man In Havana* (1959) and his role as the iconic Mr. Bridger alongside Michael Caine in *The Italian Job* (1968).

Writer, actor, director, film producer, painter, songwriter, cabaret artist as well as an author of a novel, verse, essays and autobiographies, he was called by close friends ‘The Master’. His final West End appearance was *Song at Twilight* in 1966, which he wrote and starred in. He was knighted in 1970 and died peacefully in 1973 in his beloved Jamaica.

Courtesy of the Noël Coward Archive Trust



# HENRY IV

## PART 1

By Heather Helinsky, Dramaturg

In 1863, with the American Civil War still raging, President Abraham Lincoln went to see a production of *Henry IV, Part 1*. Lincoln, who studied and enjoyed Shakespeare's plays, was dismayed that one of his favorite scenes had been cut by American actor James Hackett. Lincoln then invited Hackett to the White House for dinner, questioning why this scene between Falstaff and Prince Hal, where they perform a play-within-a-play taking turns at playing the King of England, was cut from his production when Lincoln felt it was a key emotional moment.

In this scene, Prince Hal, the future hero-king of England, play-acts with Falstaff, his father-figure and mentor, at the tavern. As they take turns wearing the crown, Prince Hal realizes what he must do in the future as the King of England—banish his dear friend, the drunken knight. The scene boils down to four words: “I do; I will.”

It's a masterful moment of playwriting, and modern productions of *Henry IV, Part 1* have used those pointed words as a huge emotional turning point for Prince Hal on his

journey into becoming the next King of England. It's a test of friendship and character, and Shakespeare, a writer we admire for his use of language and wordplay, knows there are deeply profound moments, when the course of history and friendship can be broken and changed, and there's no going backwards.

We can also wonder at how an American President, who had seen so many lives lost at Gettysburg in that summer of 1863, connected personally with Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1*. We can assume Lincoln understood too well the burdens of leading a nation when his own “right” to be the leader chosen by the people was being challenged, while the common man was dying brutally on the battlefields in the name of democracy.

Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* is admired as a masterpiece for the subtlety with which it handles the ethical and emotional issues involved with the political narrative of King Henry IV, his son Hal, his rival Henry Percy “Hotspur”, and the comical knight Sir John Falstaff. It picks up where *King Richard II* leaves off, but

we jump forward in time, where King Henry IV now has a grown son, who prefers spending his time at the tavern with the drunken Sir John Falstaff, over pleasing his father and learning to be England's next king. The play covers the span of a civil war and ends with a climactic battle at Shrewsbury.

At the end of *King Richard II*, Henry Bolingbroke had strategically maneuvered to dispose of his cousin, the King. He turned the tide of public opinion against Richard II, creating a populist movement. However, it shattered an age-old belief in the divine right of kings, that the King of England was God's chosen vessel to lead England. As we find the state of England now, we see the results of a country at war with itself, over the issue of succession. Now that Henry IV is King of England, will his wayward son become the next ruler?

Meanwhile, the Percy family, who had helped King Henry gain the throne from Richard II, is now regretting their role in putting Henry on the throne and is uniting with the Scottish in the North and the Welsh in the West, to put another family

## (WO)MEN OF WILL

While the spirit of “Extreme Shakespeare” echoes what we believe to be the original rehearsal practices of Shakespeare's company, this year's cast will flip another Elizabethan tradition on its head with women playing a number of roles that were written as men. Much like Academy Award-winning actress Glenda Jackson recently took on the titular role for the Broadway revival of *King Lear*, Mairin Lee will return to PSF in the role of Prince Hal and Kathryn Tkel will make her PSF debut in the role of Hotspur. Hal and Hotspur both represent a new generation of prospective rulers, and each navigate their future and potential leadership in King Henry IV's, England. “While women (in this case excellent actresses) playing the roles of rising leaders was a driver in this casting choice, this is not a new idea. How did men playing women illuminate the text in the original productions of these plays?” asks Producing Artistic Director Patrick Mulcahy. “How will women playing roles written as men do the same in this production? Come join us to find out.”



member, Edmund Mortimer, on the throne instead. Meanwhile, ambitious Hotspur is maneuvering and acting like the son King Henry IV wishes he had.

**T**his play, although it follows *King Richard II* chronically in time, has a vastly different feel to it in style, tone, and structure. In *King Richard II*, we have a series of poetic soliloquies, revealing the inward world of Richard's mind. The speeches are high poetry, asking rhetorical questions about England and what it means to be English. It's also a play where even the Gardener, a lower-class character, speaks like a gentleman of the court, in verse, and not like a common laborer.

Not so with *Henry IV, Part 1*—here we are hearing the language spoken in an English tavern! It is raucous language—so much the language of the common man that when it was published in the First Folio, it had to be censored according to the Act to Restrain the Abuses of Players. Original names of characters also had to be changed, as the families in Shakespeare's time who were descendents of some of the historical characters, including Sir John Falstaff (modeled on St. John Oldcastle) protested because Oldcastle was regarded as a Protestant hero who died a martyr. Yet, when it was first

entered in the Stationer's Register in February of 1598, it was immediately published in two quarto editions and continued to be published and sold as popular reading.

A play, though, is more than just how popular it was in its day. This England looks very different than the elevated, poetic world of *King Richard II*. The leader is a reflection of the people. In *Henry IV, Part 1* we see Shakespeare exploring how all classes, not just the elite nobleman, are impacted by the questions of King Henry IV's reign. This is a world where even thieves cannot be true to each other, and even games of trickery have a darker resonance. We see characters searching for friends who are true and constant to each other one moment, then double-crossing their closest friends. Falstaff brags about his conquests, but he spouts lies which he thinks will serve him in the moment. Even though Falstaff and Prince Hal tease each other fondly, as Hal sees Falstaff like the father he wishes he had, he still calls him out on his deceptions:

*Prince Hal: "These lies are like their father that begets them, gross as a mountain, open, palpable..."*

*Falstaff: What, art thou mad?*

*Art thou mad? Is not the truth the truth? (Henry IV, Pt 1, Act 2, Scene 4)*

While Falstaff is one of the play's most enduring, memorable beloved characters, even he has an inward moment of reflection, although it's not delivered in the florid poetry of *King Richard II*. Falstaff asks the audience very frankly to reflect on why soldiers serve their country in the name of honor. Shakespeare's clowns often ask the most profound questions in the human experience:

*"What is honour? A word. What is in that word 'honour'? What is that 'honour'? Air. A trim reckoning. Who hath it? He that died o'Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. 'Tis insensible then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why?..." (Henry IV, Pt 1, Act 5, Scene 1)*

While Prince Hal is growing up in the tavern, not seeming to care about his reputation as a Prince, Henry Percy, known as Hotspur, is ambitiously pursuing the political power in England for his honour. It's no coincidence that Prince Hal and Hotspur have an equal number of

*continues on page 6...*

## EXTREME SHAKESPEARE: THE ACTORS TAKE CHARGE

**Mairin Lee**  
Prince Hal

PSF: *Shakespeare in Love*, *King Richard II*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Hamlet*;  
Broadway: *The Heiress*;  
Off-Broadway: Cherry Lane, Ars Nova, Wheelhouse Theater, and The Actors Company Theatre;  
Regional: McCarter, Two River, and American Conservatory Theater



**Kathryn Tkel**  
Henry Percy, Hotspur

PSF debut. Regional: Ford's Theatre, Folger Theatre, Woolly Mammoth, Round House, Olney Theatre, Rep Stage, San Jose Rep, California Conservatory Theatre, Perseverance Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, and San Francisco Playhouse



lines in the play, as the two characters take completely different paths before they meet on the battlefield of Shrewsbury.

Considered one of Shakespeare's best works that masterfully interweaves comedy and tragedy, it introduces us to the dilemma for characters from all classes, especially the lower working class, who are impacted by this leadership crisis. Henry Bolingbroke, who once swayed the voice of the people to take the crown away from an eloquent "rightful" King, is now facing challenges on all fronts, from the Scots in the North, the Welsh in the West, his former allies in court who originally placed him on the throne, and even from his only son.

And when a country is at war with itself, how does it impact how *all of us* behave? Do we drink our problems away at the tavern? How do we treat our friends? How do we spend our precious hours alive

before we are asked to serve our country? Who do we turn to for mentorship? How do the actions of our leaders set the tone for moral and ethical behavior? Who are the winners and losers? Shakespeare knows the drama inherent in all of these questions and more. Out of these existential questions, we get a larger-than-life character of Falstaff...and we see the education of a young Prince Hal, who will soon rise to be the hero-king in *Henry V*.

Through *Henry IV, Part 1*, Shakespeare is giving us a lesson in leadership, and the American President Lincoln certainly recognized the play's relevance as he grappled with the challenges of the Civil War in his time. As a student of Shakespeare, we can only imagine that Lincoln recognized the power of choosing the right words—as common and lowly as words can be—writing a brief speech of his own. ■

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University Theatre.



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King Henry IV

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Jersey, Old Globe,  
Cincinnati Playhouse,  
Perserverance Theatre



**Jane Ridley**

Mistress Quickly,  
Westmoreland

PSF: *Henry V* (2015);  
Regional: Shakespeare  
Theatre DC, Old Globe,  
Walnut Street, Orlando  
Shakespeare, Utah  
Shakespeare, Round House



**John Ahlin**

Falstaff

PSF: *Henry IV, Part 1* (2005),  
*Twelfth Night* (2008), *King John*,  
*Merry Wives of Windsor* (2010),  
*and Fiddler on the Roof*;  
Broadway: *Waiting for Godot*,  
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Off-Broadway: *Orson's Shadow*, *A*  
*Man for All Seasons*, *Chip and Gus*



**Brandon J. Pierce**

Blunt, Sheriff

PSF: *Shakespeare in Love*, *Richard*  
*II*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *The*  
*Taming of the Shrew* (2016);  
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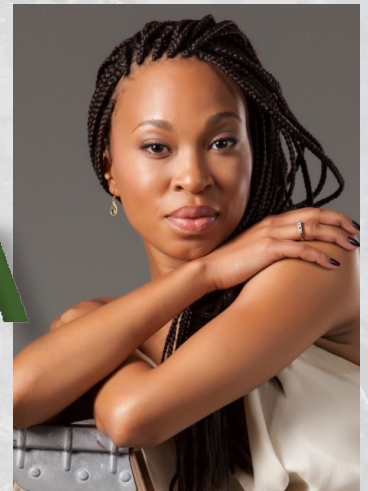
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